GEORGE FRANKLIN GRANT

If the student of social progress in Boston were asked to name the exact date when its colored people had attained to the highest degree of sociological advancement he would undoubtedly name the closing years of the 9th decade of the 19th century as the time. For then our rights, both social and political, broad-based and secured, like those of others, in public opinion, needed hardly the safe-guard of legal enactment for their guarantee, and colored men, freer than now from introspection and petty annoyances about race or color, entered more largely into the various activities of the community. Their moral status gave a large promise of future usefulness in the growth of the community, while they themselves enjoyed an unbounded outlook upon the political life and the civil and economic development of the city. We then sent regularly one, sometimes two, members to the legislature; had but recently been honored with a regular Judge on the bench in George L. Ruffin, and had still with us was Lawyer Robert Morris fresh from presiding as special justice over the Shelsea courts only a short while before. James M. Trotter was filling his national appointment in the City of Washington; William H. Dupree was at the head of the largest branch Post office of Boston, while Charles L. Mitchell, Horace Gray and John J. Fatel were holding respectively stations in the Custom, the Internal Revenue and the Sub-treasury department, hardly inferior to it in responsibility. Numerous other places of trust were held by men not quite so widely known as these in the various departments of the State and national governments located in this city.

In the business walks there were several successful tailors, at the head of whom was John H. Lewis with a $75,000. annual business, and an equal number of caterers among whom Joseph Lee with his popular Auburndale hostelry, and his Hereford in Boston was easily the prince. Nor was there less substantial work in the accumulation of property. Among the leaders in this class were such men as Holliday Nathaniel Springfield, and Thomas Scarlet with holdings amounting to thirty, fifty and seventy-five thousand dollars, respectively/ and Theodore Raymond who had already begun that successful career in real estate which has since put him among the leaders in that business within the limits of Greater Boston. The province of colored letters was still rejoicing over the unique and varied career of William Wells Brown then bur recently closed, and was welcoming with equal warmth the success of Archibald H. Grimke in his splendid biographies of Garrison and Sumner. Men also with keen insight into public issues and with vast knowledge and experience from the past,- such as Lewis Hayden, Edwin G. Walker, John J. Smith and Mark R. DeMortie, were still with us to throw a kind of benediction over every public occasion of community interest, by their presence, and to give fit counsel at the proper moment from their stock of garnered wisdom. But probably the clearest and most convincing evidence of fair play

towards the colored part of the community was the rapid increase of teachers in the schools of our section. It was only thirty years before that colored men and their antislavery friends had succeeded, after the hardest kind of fighting, in getting rid of special schools for their children. But now not only was every memory of race feeling gone from among the pupils, but colored instructors were teaching in the public schools ranging from one or two at first to quite a dozen in our day. Indeed Miss Maria L. Baldwin was already at the head of the famous Aggasez Grammar School of Cambridge. A place she has so long filled with such credit to herself and race. But among this teaching throng both by reason of his great felicity as a teacher as well as because of the conspicuous place he filled the late Dr. George Franklin Grant , so long connected with the Harvard Dental School was preeminently the first. His position was unique in the teaching world, having had no exact parallel at that time or since, and would find only a remotely similar one in the far-off New York Central College of long ago.

George Franklin Grant was one of seven children born to Tudor Elandor and Phillis Pitt Grant in the little city of Oswego, N. Y. Which nestles on Lake Ontario in Northwestern New York. The exact date of his birth is given on his entrance at Howard Dental as the 15th of September, 1846, though little else seems to have been preserved to us from that time. But in a small country town in those days life was not blessed with a large diversity of amusements for either adults or children; and the latter were strictly taught to

" Rise with the lark and with the lark to bed."

Young Grant did however have the advantage of a good school to which with the other children of the community himself and borthers and sisters were equally admitted. It would in face have been impossible otherwise in that enterprising little centre to which Garrett Smith had even then already given a library and in which Samuel Ringgold Ward, the noted black, was nominated for the vice presidency by the Liberty party in 1850. But most of Dr. Grant's education was obtained in the school of hard experience; for about his 15th year a chance misunderstanding between his father and himself as to what constituted the proper wearing apparel for lads of his age started the boy into the world upon his own resources. He therefore set out from home determined to earn means for his own support And as a chance started him into the world, chance decided his choice of a life occupation. The accedental passing of Dr. S. A. Smith's dental office in a neighboring street of Oswego in in 1860 proved to be the youngster's making. His mind was at once caught with the very sight of the word dentist. He went in and asked the dentist for work saying in reply to the query of what he wanted to do, that he would like to be a dentist but was willing at that time to do anything. Dr. Smith who is still living says " he was so struck with the boy's earnestness that he at

once took him into his office as an errand boy. In this position George was used either to tend door and run errands but most of all to help the doctor in his dental laboratory. Thus he remained studying the art of dentistry in every detail, learning finally to make with his own hands the plates and teeth to be used, and everything else about the profession that his skilled preceptor could teach him. After five years in the laboratory of Dr. Smith young Grant, desiring a wider opportunity both for knowledge of the profession and a broader outlook to practice it, made his way to Boston some time early in 1867. He was now about entering upon his 21st year, and a new world and new life was opening up before him.

As is generally the way in such cases the young stranger brought with him a larger amount of enthusiasm than of cash, his actual amount in pocket being but $12. He took up residence in the old West End of Boston which was still the popular section for old residents and the major part of his own race. Here, too, were the Harvard Medical School, and its new dental adjunct which threw open its doors for pupils the first time that new year. It is probably that the young dental student never heard of the new school until after reaching Boston; and then more from his proximit of residence than from its fame. At any rate he learned of it, and his ambition was at once fired to become a student. For this purpose the knowledge which he had gained with his dental preceptor at home stood him in good stead. He applied to one or two dentists for laboratory work as soon as he arrived and the skill which he showed under trial won him an opening with good remuneration almost from the start. His natural cleverness made him a most desirable laboratory assistant and he was enabled to lay up means for his schooling. After a year's earnest labor thus, young Grant entered the Harvard dental school in the autumn of 1868, to complete his education. Fortunate for him the dental school was at that time itself situated nearby in Cambridge St. with its infirmary only a little way removed, at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and the young student was not forced to spend much time apart from his laboratory work, in reaching the class work during the two years then required for the dental course. With money earned by his own efforts therefore he was enabled to finish one of the 22 men who were graduates at the second commencement of Harvard Dental School, in the class of 1870. The young dentist came out with honors for class-work, but the mere academic distinction was nothing to that which his marvelous mechanical ingenuity in invention won for him. In this department of his profession he whone up the bright particular star not only of his class but of the dental schoo, remaining till the last without a rival in his achievements. In particular it was his skill in treating the cleft palate which won Dr. Grant his greatest distinction. This conrental defect in nature was practically abolished by the force of his active intellect. As is generally known,

the cleft palate arises from certain abnormal cases where a child is born and reaches maturity without a fully developed palate or roof of mouth. Either the solid or the soft portion (or both) of the top of the cavity may be wanting and in either case talking and eating become a difficulty. The well-known ailment commonly spoken of as hair-lip is a partial form of cleft palate.

Soon after his graduation, the question of the treatment of the cleft palate got quite generally into the discussions of dental cercles of all the older larger cities But only one man a New York dentist had found Truman W. Kingsley, D. D. S., D.D. to treat it, and. He was prevailed upon to come and deliver a course of lectures in Boston which Dr. Grant together with other young aspirants in the profession attended. With the light thus gained, our young dentist's natural turn for the mechanical side of his profession soon made him master of the whole subject. At length an opportunity came for him to shiw the authorities his skill in the treatment of a case of cleft palate in 1874. His patient was a young lady of providence who had suffered throughout life from the disagreeable effect of that ailment. She had great difficulty both in talking and eating. She was brbrought by her brother to Dr. Grant who treated the case by the means of applying a rubber plate to the roof of the mouth. TThis was donw with such consummate skill that not only was the patient relieved of every difficulty in talking and eating but she was enabled afterwards to sing in the leading role of a church choir. This case coming so soon upon the heels of his other work proved the making of Dr. Grant. It is only necessary to add further that such was the impression made upon the Harvard Dental Faculty that they employed him to aid them in the dental laboratory. Dr. Grant's first named position was that of demonstrator in mechanical dentistry which the annual catalogues show him to have filled during the ten years between 1874 and 1884 though he is said to have performed the same duties a year or so before his name appeared in the catelogue as such.

As demonstrator of the use of the plate and other devices for the cleft-palate Dr. Grant remained connected with the dental school during the next ten years from 1874 to 1884, increasing all the time both in popularity and efficiency. His title at this time was " Demonstrator of Mechanical Dentistry," and while the pay was not large, yet he had free office room, and the use of the dental laboratory in which he was enabled to do not only his own but most of the cleft-palate work of other Boston dentists of that day. By the end of 1884, his fame had won another promotion at the dental school. This time he was made " Instructor in the treatment of the cleft-palate and cognate diseases", becoming in addition a regular member of the Harvard dental faculty/ both of which places he filled with eminent satisfaction to all, during the next five years till 1889. This last position was and continues to be the highest academic place ever filled by a colored man in America, and prob-

ably in the world, when the same and rank of Harvard among universities is considered. As instructor he delivered lectures on his subjects and performed operations or did whatever else the position of an enlightened teacher required. There was still, however, more glory than financial gain from his position in the dental school. That was not the day of large salaries for the teaching throng; with men of their ilk, life still consisted much in "plain living and high thinking."

The writer of this(who was then among the raw-recruit waiters at Memorial Hall) will probably never forget the impression made upon him by his first sight of Dr. Grant. It was in the fall of 1887, the year celebrating the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harvard. The great day had arrived, and the long line of graduates students and distinguished visitors from home and abroad were in motion to Saunders Theatre. Grover Cleveland, President of the United States and his cabinet were present to lend dignity to the occasion. The Governor of the State, with the National Lancers in gold lace, attended in his official capacity. The long line formed and got under way headed by the college president and Fellows, accompanied by distinguished guests. Then came the various faculties of the graduate schools according to rank all capped and gowned amid blare of the bands and the continuous cheers of students.

" Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced,
Standards and ganfalons 'twixt van and rear
Stream in the air, and for distinction serve
Of hierarchies, of orders and degrees;
Or in their glittering tissues bear emblazed
Holy memorials, acts of zeal and love
Recorded eminent."

Young and in our humble position only to reach our academic goal, we were already enchanted by the glamour of the spectacle; but when the dental faculty swept by, and the terra cotta face of the somewhat undersized doctor, with elastic dignified step, and richly robed in his red and purple gown was seen we felt as if transfixed to the spot. There had been hardly a thought of seeing a colored man in line at all, to say nothing of one's being present as part of the governing board of the University! The whole thing appeared to be a dream then, and has remained indelibly in mind by reason of the honor thus shown the colored race.

The distinguished dentist had however by this time made such progress in his private practice that he felt himself enabled to shoulder the responsibility of married life and so wedded Miss Georgiana H. Smith a daughter of ex-Representative John J. Smith one of Boston's leading citizens. As was to be expected in such a union the marriage proved an ideal one, both by its results as an exampplary family and the mutual encouragement derived from two

souls of like culture; for they both stood high in the community, moving alike in the best church and social circles. They were even leading singers of a choir, and have transmitted their love of music to their accomplished daughter who survives them. The young couple took up permanent residence after a short while at Arlington Heights a Boston suburb with much of a rural prospect still, but decidedly more so at that day. From his Arlington home he continued to come daily to his Boston office and the dental school, living there on " the heights" even after he had severed his connection with Harvard. But his patients got to be so numerous finally that the question of economy of time forced him to seek quarters nearer his office. Dr. Grant met this new demand by buying a house at 108 Charles St. to which he transferred his office, and occupied the rest of the spacious establishment as the living apartment for himself and efmily. In his Charles St. home he lived during the last 22 years of his life, enjoying the society of such choice friends as were wise and good, and better still, with a professional practice increasing as the years advanced.

It would be, of course, a violation of the ethics of any profession to make public the names of the clientele without their permission and we are estopped accordingly at the very outset from making use of much data that would illuminate this phase of our subject. We may at least add, however, that most of the leading members of the Harvard faculty were among his patrons, and that it was not uncommon to find among his Back Bay and Brookline patrons the parents, and even children who had returned from other cities for dental care. Thus Dr. Grant in time came to treat cleft palate cases from Paris and other foreign cities, and enjoyed a wider international reputation than any colored or perhaps other American dentist especially in his line, ever had possessed before. Though caring little or nothing for society as such he ever took the deepest interest in whatever related to his profession. He was one of the founders and one time President of the Harvard Odentological society and also a member of the American dental academy of dental science and always held in the highest esteem by those of his profession. Dr. Grant greatly delighted in out-door activities, especially in golf and tennis which afforded vigorous exercise, and he could be found at his Arlington links early and late when weather and opportunity permitted. It was this delight with being under the open skies that lead him to buy in his latter years his country seat at Chester in rural New Hampshire to which he always hastened as soon as the vacation season arrived. It was here that he was sojourning at the time of his death on the 21st of August 1910, and thence were his remains taken back to his Charles St. home in Boston for funeral services, and brought together one of the largest and most representative gatherings of friends irrespective of race we have noted at a private funeral.

Dr. Grant was again married in 1895, his first wife having died in August 1891. His second wife was Miss Frances B. Bailey of Cambridge, equally well known and accomplished as the first. Four daughters survive their father, two from each marriage, the former of whom have themselves married, while the two younger are still at school living meanwhile with their widowed mother in the family homestead.